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“Walking in Wisdom” – Ephesians 5:15-6:9

Vacations & road maps

As we return to our studies in Ephesians this morning we are going to step back and look at the big picture of where we have been and where we are going over the coming months.

The letter to the Ephesians breaks down into two parts (theology / application; doctrine / duty). Chapters 1-3 introduce the great redemptive truths of:

- God’s electing love and our union with Christ (**1:3-5**); Who through His resurrection has become the exalted ruler over all creation (**1:20-23**)
- The power of grace to make sinners alive from the dead (**2:5**), set them on a new course for their lives (**2:10**); forming them (Jew and Gentile) into one new man (**2:15**) in whom the Spirit of God dwells as the new temple (**2:18-22**).
- The unforeseen and radical nature of the multi-ethnic church (**3:5**), which overcomes some of the effects of the Tower of Babel and demonstrates the manifold wisdom and the power of the love of Christ to both the angelic realm (**3:10**) and the children of God for all eternity (**3:19**).

In light of the new reality brought about through the gospel, Paul calls upon the Ephesian believers to appropriate these truths day to day by living differently from the unsaved around them (**chapters 4-6**).

Specifically, Paul uses the metaphor of **“walking”** to express the process of living the new life in union with Christ. He says we are to...

1. **Walk in Unity (4:1-16)** - humility, gentleness, deference, ministering your gifts to one another in order to build up the local body.
2. **Walk in Holiness (4:17-32)** - putting off the old man and his darkened thinking and replacing those thoughts and deeds with ones that do good to others.
3. **Walk in Love (5:1-6)** - recognizing that our sexuality is a gift from God and is only to be used to love and serve others rather than to degrade them and us by giving in to lustful passions.
4. **Walk in Light (5:7-14)** - changing our activities and outlook to not only avoid deeds of darkness personally (especially sexual sin) but exposing them within the church by the light of the gospel in order to help others escape from this soul-damaging snare. You will remember that we took the time over several sermons to make specific application of these truths in the realm of modesty and entertainment choices.
5. **Walk in Wisdom (5:15-6:9)**

(v. 15a) ***“Therefore be careful how you walk”***

“Therefore” relates back to the thought of v. 10-11. This is the overarching thought of this whole section. Paul is commanding them to live like believers. As Christians walking through a mental minefield of false teachers (**4:14**), formerly darkened thinking that can take us captive (**4:17-19**), sexual immorality and sensual pleasures (**5:6-8**) they needed to watch their step and be wise in their approach to their new life in Christ.

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Paul illustrates the careful approach through five imperatives or commands arranged into three “**not...but**” statements.

A.) Not like this...But like this (v. 15b)

v. 15-16) *Therefore be careful how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise, making the most of your time, because the days are evil.* (literally: redeeming the time).

Wise means “*skilled in the affairs of life.*” **Redeeming** - (*exagorazō* - *buying up, making the most of*). The idea of a man who is looking for a bargain. **Time** - Paul does not use the word “*chronos*” which is “*clock time*” measured in hours, minutes, and seconds; instead he uses *kairos* = *season or opportunity*.

Walking in wisdom means looking for opportunities to do good in this present evil age; recognizing that is why Christ has us here. This directly confronts a life whose focus is on self-gratification.

- ***So, teach us to number our days, that we may present to You a heart of wisdom. Psalm 90:12***

B.) Not like this... But like this (v. 17)

So then do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is.

Foolish: *senseless, ignorant, without reason, stupid.*

Understand the will of the Lord i.e. “*put together the pieces.*” The will of the Lord is a theme that dominates chapter one of this letter.

- ***Eph. 1:1*** - Paul becomes an apostle by the will of God to carry the gospel to the Gentiles and uniquely contribute to the building of the Church [1/2 of Book of Acts; wrote 13 of 21 epistles].
- ***Eph. 1:5*** - It is the will of God that brought about our predestination to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ.
- ***Eph. 1:9-10*** - It is the will of God to gather all of creation under the lordship of Christ - He is the great Messianic King!
- ***Eph. 1:11-14*** - It is the will of God that Jews and Gentiles have an inheritance together in Christ, guaranteed by the sealing of the Holy Spirit.

It is foolish for a Christian to order their life in a way that contradicts God’s cosmic purposes in Christ. Jesus said, “***I will build My Church***” - knowing this to be true there can be no greater goal in life than to be actively about the business of making, maturing, and multiplying disciples of Jesus Christ.

C.) Not like this... But like this (v. 18)

And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit,

“Be filled” (πληροῦσθε - present passive imperative), continual action (*be being filled*). The evidence of filling is found in the five participles that follow the verb “**be filled**” (v. 19-21). **Verse 18-21** forms one long sentence in the Greek.

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The fifth participle “**submitting**” is further elaborated in the three household relationships that follow in verses **5:22-6:9**. Taken together these participles are the overflow and tangible evidence of a Spirit-filled life.

1.) Speaking (v. 19a) - Speaking to each other (horizontal communication) in music, the purpose of which is to encourage, admonish, and edify fellow believers.

The next two participles are related (connected by “**and**”) and are the expression of musical praise from our heart to the Lord.

2.) Singing (v. 19b) - Vertical communication of voice.

3.) Making melody (v. 19b) - Vertical expressions of praise to God (voice and/or instrument).

4.) Giving thanks (v. 20)

- Constantly
- For everything
- In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ
- To God the Father

5.) Submitting to one another (v. 21) - Submitting (*hupotassō* - military term) has the idea of lining up under. Since obviously both men and women cannot line up under each other, the “**one another**” here means submission to the authority God has established in each of the household relationships detailed in **verses 5:22-6:9**.

a.) Wives / husbands (5:22)

b.) Children / fathers (6:1)

c.) Slaves / masters (6:5)

Beloved, walking in wisdom simply put is living life in accordance with the radical transformation that God has brought about in us when He made us alive together with Christ. This transformation affects every area of our lives, changes the way we think about ourselves and others, and through the indwelling Holy Spirit grants us access to the power necessary to have victory over sin and temptation.

Discussion questions:

- 1) In what ways(s) does Paul's presentation in chapters 1-3 "set the table" for the balance of the letter?
- 2) What specific teaching in chapters 1-3 stand out for you as critical for Christian ethics and why?
- 3) Can you find any logical progression in the five "walking" passages of Ephesians? If so, what and why?
- 4) Are any of the five "walking" passages more difficult to understand or practice than the others? If so, which ones and why?
- 5) What are hoping to learn or be encouraged about in the coming studies in Eph. 5:15-6:9? Why?

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